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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 VATICAN 001419

SIPDIS

DEPT. FOR EUR/SCE (WETZEL), EUR/WE (VAN CLEVE),
EUR/BI; PD/ECA (SEXTON)

EMBASSY VATICAN/MESSAGE NO.-39/01

E.O. 12958: DECL. 03/13/11

TAGS: PREL PHUM PGOV BH PHUM PGOV BH VT VTPREL
SUBJECT: HOLY SEE SEEKS UNDERSTANDING ON MANAGING
MOSTAR BISHOP

CLASSIFIED BY A/DCM GEORGE H. FROWICK FOR
REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D).

REF (A) HOH/FROWICK EMAILS; (B) SARAJEVO 1096 AND
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PREVIOUS; (C) STATE 43081; (D) FROWICK/SJOHNSON
EMAILS

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: THE HOLY SEE DOES NOT SHARE THE POLITICAL VIEWS OF THE BISHOP OF MOSTAR AND OTHER CROAT-NATIONALIST CLERGY IN B-H AND IT IS DOING THE UTMOST WITHIN THE TRADITIONAL LIMITS OF THE CHURCH TO CHANGE THEIR POLITICAL BEHAVIOR. OUR INTERLOCUTORS BELIEVE THE CLERGY'S VALID CONCERNs ON BEHALF OF THEIR FLOCK WERE REFLECTED IN MARCH 2 LETTER CARDINAL PULJIC SENT PRESIDENT BUSH. FOR NOW, THE HOLY SEE'S EFFORTS TO EFFECT CHANGE IN THE HERZEGOVINIAN CLERGY ARE FOCUSED ON THE NUNCIO IN SARAJEVO. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) A/DCM FOLLOWED UP ON REF A EXCHANGE IN A 3/9 MEETING WITH VATICAN BALKANS DIRECTOR MSGR. JOSEPH MARINO. IN THAT CONVERSATION, MARINO SAID THAT HE HAD ALREADY HEARD ON THE ISSUE OF THE BISHOP OF MOSTAR FROM SRSG JACQUES KLEIN 3/5. FRENCH AMB. TO THE HOLY SEE DEJAMMET ALSO CALLED 2/8. MARINO SAID THIS WAS CLEARLY HIS "ISSUE DU JOUR" AND THAT HE HAD PREPARED A PAPER FOR FM TAURAN UPON THE LATTER'S RETURN FROM IRAN. MARINO TOOK A/DCM'S POINT THAT BISHOP PERIC HAD OVERSTEPPED IN CALLING FOR A UNILATERAL REVISION OF DAYTON AND IN PUBLICLY SUPPORTING CONVICTED WAR CRIMINALS, BUT HE OPINED THAT THE CROATS HAVE BEEN SAYING FOR MANY MONTHS THAT THEIR LEGITIMATE INTERESTS HAVE BEEN LARGELY IGNORED BY THE I/C. WHEN A/DCM PRESSED FOR THE HOLY SEE TO DO SOMETHING TO REIN-IN THE BISHOP, MARINO CONFIDENTIAL

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EXPLAINED THAT THERE WAS VERY LITTLE THE HOLY SEE COULD DO OTHER THAN PULL THE BISHOP ASIDE FOR A QUIET TALK (NOTE: SEE PARAS 5-6 FOR FURTHER BACKGROUND ON THE LIMITS FACED BY THE HOLY SEE IN DEALING WITH POLITICAL MATTERS INSIDE THE CHURCH. FYI: TO THE BEST OF OUR KNOWLEDGE, NEITHER PERIC NOR PULJIC ARE FRANCISCAN; WE RECOGNIZE THAT THE FRANCISCANS REPRESENT YET ANOTHER OBSTACLE TO INTER-COMMUNAL RECONCILIATION IN B-H. END NOTE.)

¶3. (C) A/DCM FOLLOWED UP REF C INSTRUCTION ON 2/13, MEETING AGAIN WITH MSGR. MARINO. AFTER HEARING THE TALKING POINTS, MARINO ASSURED US THAT THE VATICAN HAS HEARD THE SAME MESSAGE FROM A NUMBER OF SOURCES AND THAT IT WILL DO EVERYTHING IN ITS POWER TO TRY TO CHANGE THE HERZEGOVINA CLERGY'S BEHAVIOR. HE POINTED OUT THAT THE HOLY SEE IS ON RECORD SUPPORTING A DEMOCRATIC AND MULTIETHNIC B-H, AND THAT THIS POSITION HAS NOT CHANGED. HE SAID THAT THE NUNCIO IS ACTIVELY ENGAGED UNDER INSTRUCTION FROM THE HOLY SEE, HAS ALREADY SPOKEN WITH CARDINAL PULJIC, AND WILL LIKELY SPEAK WITH BISHOP PERIC SOON. HE NOTED THAT PULJIC HAD SENT A LETTER TO PRESIDENT BUSH MARCH 2, AND THOUGHT THAT A HIGH-LEVEL RESPONSE MIGHT BE A GOOD WAY FOR THE USG TO REINFORCE THE NUNCIO'S REPRESENTATIONS.

¶4. (C) A/DCM PRESSED ON THE POSSIBILITY OF A PUBLIC STATEMENT FROM THE HOLY SEE; IF NOT A DENUNCIATION OF THE MOSTAR BISHOP THEN AT LEAST A RESTATEMENT OF RELEVANT PASSAGES FROM THE PONTIFF'S NEW YEARS
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MESSAGE SUPPORTING DEMOCRACY AND MULTIETHNIC/INTER-COMMUNAL SOCIETIES. MARINO REPLIED THAT THE CHURCH WOULD NOT PUBLICLY DISAVOW OF ONE OF ITS OWN OVER A POLITICAL MATTER, RECALLING THAT DURING THE PEOPLE

POWER REVOLUTION IN MANILA CARDINAL SIN WAS MORE ACTIVE THAN THE CHURCH PREFERRED. NOR IS THE HOLY SEE CONTEMPLATING SENDING A HIGHER LEVEL OFFICIAL FROM THE SECOND SECRETARIAT (NOTE: MFA EQUIVALENT) TO REINFORCE THE NUNCIO'S MESSAGE. A/DCM RECALLED THAT AS RECENTLY AS LAST SUNDAY THE PONTIFF

PUBLICLY

CONDEMNED BASQUE TERRORISM IN VERY STRONG TERMS EVEN THOUGH THE BASQUE CHURCH IS NOTORIOUS FOR ITS SUPPORT OF BASQUE INDEPENDENCE. MARINO RESPONDED THAT THERE IS A NEW BASQUE BISHOP WHO FULLY SUPPORTED THE PONTIFF'S STATEMENT; THE SITUATION IN B-H, WHILE SIMILAR, IS THUS NOT FULLY ANALOGOUS.

BACKGROUND ON CHURCH DISCIPLINE

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ACTION ECA-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AF-00	ACQ-00	CIAE-00	INL-00	DODE-00
	DS-00	EUR-00	VC-00	TEDE-00	INR-00	VCE-00	DCP-01
	NSAE-00	PC-01	SSO-00	SS-00	SNIS-00	NISC-00	DSCC-00
	DRL-02	SAS-00	/004W				

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O 131705Z MAR 01
FM AMEMBASSY VATICAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0000
INFO AMEMBASSY SARAJEVO
AMEMBASSY ZAGREB

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 VATICAN 001419

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SUBJECT: HOLY SEE SEEKS UNDERSTANDING ON MANAGING
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15. (SBU) CATHOLIC BISHOPS ENJOY A UNIQUE AUTONOMY WITHIN THEIR JURISDICTIONS. AS LONG AS THEY DO NOT FALL INTO THEOLOGICAL, MORAL OR SPIRITUAL ERROR, THERE IS LITTLE THE POPE AND VATICAN OFFICIALS CAN CONFIDENTIAL

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DO TO CORRECT A BISHOP'S POLITICAL/POLITICAL INDISCRETIONS, EVEN WHEN THEY HAVE THE INCLINATION TO DO SO. THE POPE IS THE SOLE JUDGE OF BISHOPS, BUT HAS "JURIDICAL COMPETENCE" ONLY IN SPIRITUAL OR ECCLESIASTICAL MATTERS. IN THE LAST 100 YEARS, CATHOLIC BISHOPS HAVE HELD A VARIETY OF POLITICAL POSITIONS RANGING FROM NEAR-MARXIST SOCIALISM TO HARD-LINE FASCISM, WITHOUT BEING DISCIPLINED BY THE HOLY SEE. THE POLITICAL POLICY OF POPES AND THE VATICAN GOVERNMENT TENDS TO BE CENTRIST, BUT IT HAS NEITHER THE AUTHORITY NOR, USUALLY, THE WILL TO PROMOTE ONE POLITICAL EXPRESSION OVER ANOTHER.

16. (SBU) FURTHERMORE, UNDER THE PRINCIPLE KNOWN AS SUBSIDIARITY IT IS VATICAN POLICY NOT TO CARRY OUT AT A HIGHER LEVEL WHAT CAN BE SUCCESSFULLY ACHIEVED AT A LOWER LEVEL. IF THE VATICAN WERE TO HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT DIVISIVE NATIONALISTIC REMARKS MADE BY AN OTHERWISE THEOLOGICALLY AND MORALLY FAITHFUL CATHOLIC BISHOP, IT COULD BEGIN AN INTERVENTION THROUGH THE LOCAL CATHOLIC HIERARCHY: A NEIGHBORING BISHOP, THEN A SENIOR BISHOP, THEN PERHAPS THE PAPAL NUNCIO. THIS APPROACH HAS WORKED IN THE PAST WHERE THE BISHOPS' COUNCIL IS LARGE, AND CONTAINS BISHOPS WITH POLITICAL VIEWS SYMPATHETIC TO THOSE OF THE HOLY SEE (NOTE: APPARENTLY NOT THE CASE IN B-H).

COMMENT

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17. (C) THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN CROATIA AND B-H IS A FIERCELY LOYAL SUPPORTER OF THE PRESENT POPE AND OF THE VATICAN. IT IS UNLIKELY THAT THE HOLY SEE WOULD WISH TO PUBLICLY CHASTISE A CROATIAN BISHOP,

APPOINTED BY POPE JOHN PAUL II, FOR EXCEEDING THE BOUNDS OF POLITICAL PRUDENCE. POST HAS OVER PAST MONTHS DISCUSSED WITH THE VATICAN AS WELL AS WITH OTHER CONTACTS POSSIBLE AVENUES TO TAME THE MOSTAR BISHOP'S MORE DESTRUCTIVE NATIONALIST IMPULSES. POST WOULD BE INTERESTED IN WHETHER THE BISHOPS OF THE CROAT BISHOPS CONFERENCE SUPPORT PERIC'S ACTIVITY. FOR NOW, WE ARE SEEKING TO DEVELOP AN INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE (REF D) WITH THE SANT'EGIDIO COMMUNITY, IN LARGE PART TO TRY TO BRING PERIC OUT OF THE CROAT-NATIONALIST POLITICAL WILDERNESS.

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